



GA DOT Working To Secure State's Freight & Logistics Future

As Georgia's economy surely and steadily regains its footing, business and government leaders increasingly are able to focus on economic growth. Looking forward, a key economic driver for the state, both in the immediate and the long term, will be its burgeoning freight and logistics industry.

Already, the business of moving goods among growers, suppliers, manufacturers, vendors and consumers is staggeringly successful. That movement alone represents a \$15-billion-a-year industry in Georgia. Just five freight and logistics components of our overall economy – manufacturing, construction, retail, utilities and agriculture – generate more than \$100 billion of output each year, a full quarter of our gross state product. Some economists give those sectors a growth potential of 75 to as much as 200 percent over the next 35 years. State ports in Savannah and Brunswick generate some \$67 billion in sales and \$2.5 billion in state and local tax revenues annually. The ports provide good jobs for more than 352,000 Georgians. An ongoing expansion of the Panama Canal is projected to create a significant increase in freight shipments entering the United States via East Coast ports. The Georgia Department of Transportation is working with public and private freight partners to understand, prepare for, and capture this incoming freight. A deepened ship channel serving Savannah and the planned new port in Jasper will lead to savings of approximately \$213 million a year nationally in reduced shipping costs and ensure Georgia's position as a pre-eminent focal point of international commerce. A comprehensive Georgia DOT study of all modes of the state's freight and logistics industry points to possible overall gains of \$65 billion and thousands of new jobs during the next four decades.

As with all good things though, we will not be able to “wish” ourselves to this reality. We must commit to it in policy and in practice; we must work toward it continuously. There is a proverb that says: *“Some people make things happen; some watch things happen; others wonder what has happened.”*

Georgia DOT will be among the former. Working with the Ports Authority, the Department of Economic and Community Development's Center of Innovation for Logistics, major railroads and industry leaders, we have developed a comprehensive statewide Freight and Logistics Action Plan (www.dot.ga.gov/freight). It is a prioritized “to-do” list – an expansive agenda to make Georgia *The Global Gateway of Choice*.

An across-the-spectrum investment of \$15 billion is recommended; more than \$9 billion just for highways. Among the plan's most pressing highway recommendations are:

- Additional long-haul capacity on Interstate Highway 85 in each direction from Gwinnett County to South Carolina and from Meriwether County to Alabama, on Interstate Highway 75 between Atlanta and Macon and on Interstate Highway 20 from Douglas County to Alabama;
- Improving Interstate Highway 285's six metro Atlanta interchanges with I-85, I-75 and I-20;
- Rebuilding the I-75 interchange with Interstate Highway 16 in Macon;
- Improved Interstate Highway 95 interchanges with I-16 and State Route 21 in Savannah;
- Widening and improvements on other key freight corridors such as U.S. Highway 84 and State Route 133 in south Georgia and U.S. Highway 441 between I-85 and I-16; and

- Improvements to the critical “last mile” routes near the Port of Savannah and the numerous warehouse and distribution facilities along State Route 6 on Atlanta’s west side.

These will be expensive and time-consuming projects, particularly given the Department’s limited resources and concurrent responsibility to maintain the 18,000 existing miles of Georgia roadways. Some already are underway, however, and we’re actively seeking innovative ways to deliver the others. Georgia **will** maintain and expand its role as a global hub for freight and logistics.

Together, we **will** set a good example for our children and grandchildren of people who make things happen.

Toby Carr is Planning Director and Todd Long Deputy Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Transportation.